CHAPTER - II

EVOLUTION OF TIRUPATI.
PHOTOGRAPH 2

The following picture presents a view of Tirumala Hills. Also visible are the starting point of the footpath of steps and the tower in which the feet of Sri Venkateswara is engraved in relief on a granite slab on the floor. The scaffolding is put up for decoration purpose for the annual festival of the Lord. The forest dividers are also seen along the slope of the hill, which prevent spreading of forest fires.
The town of Tirupati owes its origin to the nearby adjacent pilgrimage centre, Tirumala hills. Tirumala is the abode of Sri Venkateswara popularly known as Lord Balaji of the Seven hills. Tirupati lies at the foot of these sacred hills. Hence the growth and evolution of Tirupati is closely linked to the history of Tirumala. The shrine of Sri Venkateswara has an unique history and position. The traditions concerning the temple are scattered over twelve puranas and ‘Upapuranas’¹. The earliest mention of the Lord of Tirumala was found in “Tolkappiam” - a Tamil literary work of the second century B.C. King Tondaiman of the Satavahana dynasty, is supposed to have discovered the “Swayambhu murthi” (self-manifested idol) around the first century A.D. He started worshipping it after constructing a temple over the site. Upto the ninth century A.D., the Pallavas assumed sovereignty over the area around Tirumala hills. However, the political condition in the Tamil country during the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries A.D.,

¹ Agarwala V S (1963) “Matysa Purana - a study”, Kashiraj trust, Ramnagar Fort. The Puranas are ancient Hindu scriptures.
was anything but settled, owing to frequent wars between the Pallava, Chola and Pandya dynasties. In the religious sphere also there existed rivalry between the Saivites and Vaishnavites - regarding the forms of the God they worshipped i.e. Siva and Vishnu respectively. When such circumstances was the order of the day, the Chola king of Chidambaram ordered the removal of the idol of Sri Govindaraja (Sri Vishnu) from the famous Nataraja (dancing Siva) temple of Chidambaram. This king, Kuluthunga Chola was a staunch Saivite, and when the ruler takes sides by preferring one sect, it becomes difficult for people of the other sect to spread their message. The great Vaishnav scholar, Sri Ramanujacharya, brought this idol to Tirupati. By this time, around the 10th century A.D., a silver image of Sri Venkateswara (Vishnu) was already consecrated on the Seven Hills and Vaishnav priests were engaged in the work of its worship. Tirumala Nambi, an uncle of Sri Ramanujacharya was one of the priests. Hence Sri Ramanujacharya would have thought of this place around the hills as safe and secure for the ousted idol of Sri Govindaraja. At this time, there existed some small settlements at the foot of the hills - Kottur, Kapilatheertham, temple and Tiruchanoor (fig. 2, 1)

KOTTUR

The following three inscriptions of different dates - no.19 T.T. of third quarter of the 10th century A.D., no.210 G.T. of third quarter of the 11th century A.D., and no.355

The following plate depicts the waterfall at Kapilatheeram temple. The devotees take their bath here, and proceed in their journey to the Lord of Seven hills. The settlement "Kottur" was originally located very near this spot.
G.T. of the second quarter of the 16th century A.D., available from Kapileswara temple, records the name of village Kottur, which is part of a region (sotam) whose administrative head was Rayan Rajendran. No traces of this village are now possible. However, the inscription No.210 G.T. from Sri Kapileswara temple, records that the central shrine of the temple was constructed by Rayan Rajendran. This indicates that the Sri Kapileswara temple was part of the site of the ancient village of Kottur (fig.2.1).

Secondly, the inscription No.355 G.T. dates to the period of King Achyutaraya of Vijayanagar. He built another temple - Achyuta Perumal with a front tower and a stone stepped well in the land belonging to the village of Kottur. At present there is no sign of the temple or the idol. However, the ruins of the tower (Gopuram) stands with raised ground of concrete and debris. To its immediate west is the remains of the big well indicating the existence of a temple in the past.

From these references, it may be suggested, that the village of Kottur was situated somewhere to the north-east of present day Tirupati, with the hills of Tirumala as its northern boundary.

KAPILATHEERTHAM

The shrine of Sri Kapileswara, is located (fig.2.1) at the foot of the Tirumala hills, at a point where a mountain stream cascades into a picturesque seasonal

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5. The remains of this tower was recently demolished for road construction purposes in May 1997.
PHOTOGRAPH 4

The following picture shows the water tank adjacent to the temple of Tiruchanoor. Pilgrims take a holy bath here before worshipping the deity. These water tanks are an integral part of every Hindu Temple in South India. Devotees believe that a dip in the temple tank will clean them of their sins.
waterfall and provides a base camp for pilgrims ascending the hills on their pilgrimage to Sri Venkateswara. The first mention of this temple is in 1563 A.D. However, the temple existed prior to this date, because an inscription on the door of the “mukhamandapam” (main structure) states that the structure was erected by a certain Rayan (king), who was head of the village of Kottur during the reign of Rajendra Chola who ruled the region between 1012-1044 A.D.

PARTHASARATHY TEMPLE

Adjoining the main shrine of Govindarajaswamy, on the south, there is a temple of Thiruvandi Yadava Perumal (Parthasarathy or Lord Krishna). This temple existed even before the installation of the Govindarajaswamy idol in 1130 A.D. This temple originally comprised a small shrine enclosing Sri Krishna with Rukmini and Satyabhama, his two consorts. This temple, was located a few kilometres south of the foothills (fig. 2.1.) and Sri Ramanujacharya consecrated the idol of Sri Govindaraja within the premises of the Parthasarathy temple.

TIRUCHANOOR

Long before Tirupati had its birth, this was a village of importance during the reign of the Pallava and Chola rulers. It is located on the banks of the river Swarnamukhi around 10km. south of present day Tirupati (fig.2.1). The numerous spring channels excavated from time to time

along its bed, served to keep up wet cultivation in this area. This village also had a village council called “Sabhaiyar” with over 108 learned Vaishnavites who managed the affairs of the Tirumala temple on the hills. The village was thus more favourably situated to grow into an urban centre.

GENESIS OF TIRUPATI.

The investigations made by the research supervisor M.V. Reddy revealed that the seven hills are the seven hoods of the serpent king Adiseshu, the seat or vehicle of Lord Vishnu. Since the area around and below the foothills were heavily forested and infested with insects, the prevalence of malaria fever in this part was a common phenomenon in those days. However, the people of the area, as in the case of other parts of the world, were ignorant of the true reason behind the prevalence of malaria. They attributed the disease to the bad air being breathed out by the seven hoods of Adisesha. When Ramanuja set up the idol of Govindarajaswamy within the precincts of the already existing Parthasarathy temple, he proposed the shifting of the entire village of Kottur nearer to the Parthasarathy temple. The people also readily agreed to shift to the new location, to save themselves from the ‘curse’ or ‘bad breath’ of Adisesha. Hence the village of Kottur was abandoned in favour of the present location. The Reddy’s hypothesis looks more appropriate to explain the origin of Tirupati town.

Thus we find that although settlements were in existence in and around the foothills in Kottur village to the north, as well as in Tiruchanoor to the south, the settlement of Tirupati was founded anew by Sri Ramanuja.
NANDYABHARTA TYPE OF TOWN PLAN

LEGEND

1 Siva/Vishnu temple
2 Brahmin quarters
3 School/College
4 Palace
5 Hospital
6 Courts
7 Tanks
8 Monastery
9,10 Residences for other castes
11 Artists and their houses
12 Theatre
13 Quarters for fishermen and hunters

FIG. 2-2
Sri Ramanuja, took it on himself to see that a regular town came into existence, which was not an easy task. The area around the Sri Govindaraja temple was planned by Sri Ramanuja according to the Nandyabharta pattern (fig. 2.2) It had four main streets (rajavidhis), a north mada, south mada street and sannidhi street. This area around the temple was originally known as Ramanujapuram which however is no longer in vogue. The word “Tirupati” (A Dravidian term of two words, namely ‘Tiru’ equivalent to Sanskrit Sri or Goddess Lakshmi and pati meaning husband or consort), came into use only after Sri Ramanuja planned and gave that name. The entire settlement at the foot of the hills, which includes Kapilatheertham, the then Parthasarathy temple, belongs to the original village of Kottur, is today known by the name of Tirupati.

GROWTH OF TIRUPATI SETTLEMENT

The growth of Tirupati settlement is broadly divided into three phases for the convenient of analysis

FIRST PHASE

With the installation of the idol of Sri Govindarajaswamy within the Parthasarathy temple premises in 1130 A.D. the founding of modern Tirupati was ushered in. The formation of a town in the Nandyabharta pattern with the four main streets called rajavidhis, two mada streets and

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10. Aiyar C.P.V. - Town planning in Ancient Deccan (Madras)
one sannidhi street is evidence of the imagination and engineering skills of Sri Ramanuja. The settlement around the temple was known as Ramanujapuram. The Brahmins, who were engaged in the day to day work of the temple, resided in and along the main streets, adjacent to the temple. The Archakas, who were doing worship in the Tirumala temple, also resided in these streets. Sri Ramanuja realised the necessity of founding a settlement nearer to the foothills, having a claim to sanctity, which would encourage pilgrimage to Tirumala. He took upon himself, the not so easy task, of establishing a regular settlement around the temple. For this purpose he established a pattern of worship which was to be followed by all the neighbouring temples\textsuperscript{11}. This gave the priestly class the authority to have a stronghold on the conduct of the "Pujas" (rituals of worship). He made it obligatory, for anyone having any dealings with the Tirumala temple, to keep and maintain a house in Tirupati. Hence, the Vaishnav families residing in Tiruchanoor, had to set up quarters in Tirupati. Sri Ramanuja was a great scholar and with him, the development of Vedanta Philosophy\textsuperscript{12} entered a new era. His promulgation of the "Bhakthi" (love and loyalty to God) teaching, where God is accessible to all, regardless of caste, created an enormous impact. This attracted the common people to Vaishnavism. Pilgrims on the way to Tirumala, would make a day or night's halt, partake with propriety such food as the temple would offer, have a bath in the waterfalls at Kapilatheertham, at the foot of the hills and then ascend the hills for "darshan" (viewing of the idol). At that time, there were no

\textsuperscript{12} Brodov B(1984) Indian Philosophy in Modern Times(Moscow) Page 11.
“matams” or “choultries” (places of rest run by religious organisation). It took at least one more century, for such institutions to rise along with the growth in pilgrim traffic.

The initial phase of town development, shows (fig.2.3) the built up area around the temple of Govindarajaswamy. This settlement was known as Ramanujapuram. The road leading to Kapilatheertham waterfalls and the footpath leading to the hills of Tirumala and the road to Tiruchanoor are also illustrated.

SECOND PHASE

In the early stages of town development it is evident that the growth of Tirupati in size and importance was in accordance to the volume of pilgrim traffic. This settlement around the Govindarajaswamy temple expanded over a period of centuries particularly during the rule of the Vijayanagar dynasty (1336 - 1680 A.D.). The emperor, Sri Krishna Devaraya, made four visits to Tirumala, between 1509 - 1515 A.D. and contributed liberally for the promotion of the Tirumala temple, and thereby to the growth of Tirumala and Tirupati, which were then tiny villages.

The same period bears witness to the construction of many temples and shrines on the lines of the Vaishnav sect to attract people to that sect. These temples were not only places of worship, but were institutions providing various kinds of opportunities for livelihood. They thus helped to attract people to settle around them like modern day industries and projects. This is how a "central dominant complex" came up in Tirupati. All other activities were

15. Carter Harold (1983) "An Introduction to Urban Historical Geography (London)"
subsidiary or dependent on this temple complex.

Some of the temples which were built during this period are Achyuta Perumal temple in 1537 A.D. to the south of Kapilatheertham, Tirumangai Alwar Sannidhi constructed by Sri Krishna Devaraya, Satyapurna Veeranjaneyaswamy temple in Mitta veedhi supposed to belong to the 16th century A.D., Nadamuni temple in Nathamuni street came into existence in the late 16th century A.D., Sri Varadarajaswamy temple in Beri street installed in 1596 A.D., the shrine of Nammalawar in North Mada street constructed in 1550 A.D., the Hanuman shrine at the end of the Sri Govindarajaswamy Sannidhi street in 1491 A.D. and Lakshminarayana temple in South Mada street was in existence prior to 1646 A.D.

The first mentioned two temples are now in ruins.

These temples were constructed by different people from time to time and munificent donations were also made for their day to day functioning. The high ideals of the Vaishnavite priests attracted the common man. Their organised religious practices, the rituals through which they ensured the security of the people against the menaces of nature, gave the Brahmin priests a stronghold in society. The offerings brought by the pilgrims and the devotees, were used to provide livelihood to the people who settled around the temple.

This is how "religion played a catalytic role" of transforming the small and haphazard settlement into a well planned village by the 16th century A.D.

17. Milnes D.C. (1972) "Angkor: a theocratic system of urban development" in Ekistics 33 (95)
The authority of the "priestly class" and the "centrifugal forces of the religious institutions" gradually resulted in physical agglomeration around the temple complex.

THIRD PHASE

The importance of Tirupati as a centre of pilgrimage made it obligatory on the part of the then British Government to confirm the status of Municipality as early as April 1886. This helped in providing better civic amenities for the people residing in the town, as well as the pilgrims. It also helped to prescribe the land utilisation pattern and obviate land speculation. The area of the town was 3.88 sq.km. in 1886. The borders of the town extended upto Karnala street to the south, upto the Town club to the west, upto the present Hospital road to the north and upto Theerthakatta road, Mosque road and along the road leading to Renigunta, to the east (Fig.2.3). The meter gauge railway line from Pakala-Gudur via Tirupati was also laid during this period. This line was completed by 1887, and this helped in augmenting the growth of the village.

Tirupati has an unique distinction of being declared a town in the very first census of India in 1871, when it recorded a population of 10,423. At the start of the century, the town recorded 15,485 as its total population. By 1915, the town extended upto the railway track to the south, beyond old Alipiri road (or Town club) where new residential areas like Balaji colony, Nehru nagar came into existence in the west. To the north it extended upto present day Hospital road, Singarigunta.

Beravarigunta (tanks) etc. To the east, the town limits were Korlagunta village, Tallapakamvari cheruvu (tank) and road junction of Tiruchanoor and Renigunta roads. The word ‘Gunta’ or ‘Cheruvu’ means tank. In 1931, the town limits were extended by including the lands acquired by the railway authorities. In this year, the number of Municipal wards increased from 6 to 14. In 1961, the town extended with the inclusion of the gram panchayats of, Uppangi Harijanawada, Dasari Matham, Chintala cheruvu, and Pedda Harijanawada within the Municipal limits. In 1965, the municipality was upgraded to the status of a grade I Municipality and in 1970 made a special grade Municipality. In 1971, Tirupati was brought under the category of standard urban area and it consisted of the urban components of 19 revenue wards and 16 rural blocks. The area of the municipality in 1971 was 9.01 sq.km. (fig.2.3) By 1981, another ward (20) was added and the area increased to 16.21 sq.km. In 1991, the area and number of wards remained the same (fig.2.3)

The historical evolution and growth of the town of Tirupati (fig.2.4), as analysed clearly emphasizes that religion has played a very important role. The temple of Govindarajaswamy became the nucleus, and all activities were subsidiary or dependant on this temple complex. It was the centre of social life. According to ancient Indian literature, it was22 believed that a town would prosper only with the establishment of a number of temples. Accordingly, several towns in Southern India like Madurai, Kanchipuram, Sri Kalahasti, Kumbakonam, Rameswaram etc., have originated with the temple as a nucleus.

22 Dube B (1967) "Geographical concepts in Ancient India" (Varanasi)
PHOTOGRAPH 5

The following picture shows the aerial view of Lord Venkateswara Temple in the Tirumala hills. The gold plated tower in the foreground is exactly above the sanctum where the deity is located. The background shows the two towers which the devotee has to cross to reach the sanctum.
In this context, mention may be made of the writing's of Ibn Khadun, the great medieval geographer and subsequently Riaz Hassan, on the origin of Muslim cities, where religion becomes the all effective force behind the process of urbanization. This view also finds expression in the writing's of Sjoberg and Carter. They have expressed the view of how the power structure for the creation of urban centres became ecologically effective in the hands of the priesthood. In Tirupati also, we find that it is not only growth around temples, but religion in its totality, that has helped germinate the seeds for an urban environment. The dominant religious complex, the organised religious practices of the Vaishnavite preachers, the proper disposal of the donations, funds and offerings by the "priestly class" towards town development purposes, the sense of belonging that was aroused in the minds of the people ("religious allegiance" as termed by Carter). This all pervasive role of religion brought about the phenomenal growth of Tirupati, and this will continue to act as a major catalyst in the process of urban growth in the near and distant future.

24. Sjoberg G (1960) "The pre-industrial city" (New York)